



Window To The World - Just Opened In Our Town!



Photo: Mario Linares/Prensa Libre

“I want to be a biologist - the Internet is basic for that. My parents are farmers - only one of six children have reached 8th grade. Hopefully, I can show my parents how to use the Internet so they can get better prices for crops.”

- 17-year-old Marta Estrada Reyes

The 40-year civil war in Guatemala destroyed the country's social capital and contributed to highest poverty in the hemisphere. Despite this, economic opportunity exists in the form of trade expansion both within the region and with the United States and Mexico. Entrepreneurs in Guatemala are stepping up to advance and modernize competitiveness in the marketplace.

USAID is helping develop the CONTACTO Electronic Business Center franchise model to help entrepreneurs in Guatemala achieve success. The model incorporates public-private alliance partners who are investing in thirty strategic locations in Guatemala. USAID has funded infrastructure, software support, training, and licenses for computer equipment. AGEXPRONT, Guatemala's non-traditional export trade association, provides on-going export business training for partners. Local business owners invest the base cost of the franchise (\$1,500) and commit to cover on-going management (averaging \$350 a month).

Six of the thirty business centers are strategically located in rural, poor communities. Thousands of disenfranchised young people and adults now have access to Internet services, including distance learning, e-commerce, web page design, as well as administrative and technical support. Eventually video conference capability will be added to help assist small and medium businesses, students, and others to accomplish commercial and educational endeavors. Plans are in place to expand the CONTACTO franchise to Central America and Mexico.

